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ABSTRACT

A Teacher Corps project at the University of Southern Maine College of Education consisted of a competency-based teacher education program including components in special education, human relations, reading, and language development. The responses of 24 former participants indicate the impact of the program on the participants, their work, in the schools, and at the university. The area of attitudes, traditionally considered the most difficult to change, was the central area of impact for most of the participants. Differences that participants brought to schools and children were: an openness to divergence, flexibility, self-confidence, concern for the individual, and willingness to work in teams and groups. At the university, the undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs remained unchanged. The experimental program and its faculty were not integrated into the curricula. The project seems to have made a difference in the training and the later work of participants, but has made no difference at the university. (CJ)

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New England Teacher Corps Network
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DID TEACHER CORPS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

9TH CYCLE TEACHER CORPS PROJECT

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE (PORTLAND-GORHAM)

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INTRODUCTION

On June 21, 1980, a five-year reunion was held in Scarborough, Maine, for interns and staff of the 9th cycle University of Maine (Portland-Gorham) Teacher Corps Project. The project participants included 36 interns in 6 rural school sites with 6 local team leaders, 6 local part-time community coordinators, and 7 university faculty. The competency-based teacher preparation project included program components in special education, human relations, reading, and language development.

The reunion was announced in May with invitations sent to the 48 persons for whom we had addresses. Twenty-four responses were received and the reunion was attended by 8 interms, 2 team leaders, and 5 faculty. A follow-up questionnaire was sent with 8 interns, 2 team leaders, and 2 faculty responding. These contacts provided information about all faculty members, 4 of 6 team leaders, and 29 of 36 interns. The comments in the following pages are drawn from the information provided by these 40 participants.

Teacher Corps is now in its 14th cycle of funding and the questions, "Has Teacher Corps made a difference?" is repeatedly asked by present project participants and Congress. In looking back five years, we attempt to respond to this question using the information provided by the former participants in one Teacher Corps project.

HAS TEACHER CORPS MADE A DIFFERENCE?

Teacher Corps has been funded for two purposes. One goal is to improve the education of students from families in low-income areas. The second goal of improving programs for teachers in institutions of higher education also implies a connection between change in teacher education and change in education for students from families in low-income areas.

The following comments on the impact or "difference" of one Teacher Corps project on its participants and on the students with whom they work are based on a variety of sources. These include responses to a reunion invitation and a letter survey, conversations at the reunion, telephone calls and letters from some participants who were unable to attend, and continuing contact with the University of Southern Maines' College of Education. No mention is made of the impact of the community component of the project, including the 6 community coordinators who worked part-time in each district. There were no questions about community on the questionnaire and there were no comments by interns about this part of their training.

Present Work of Participants

In 1975, all 36 interns successfully completed the program and were certified as teachers. Several received both elementary and secondary certification; others were also certified in special education and as reading specialists. Several team leaders also received additional certification in administration, reading, and special education through the support of the program.

Information on the activities of participants from 1975-80 is available for 29 interns, 4 team leaders, and all 7 faculty members. Twenty-three (64%) of the interns are known to be presently working in education. Of these 23 interns, 2 are in preschools, 16 in elementary, 1 in junior high, 1 in high school, and 2 in higher education. The others include a member of the State Senate, a potter with two young sons, a personnel manager, a bar owner and a machinist's apprentice--all residing in Maine. The 4 team leaders on whom information is available are working in education as an assistant principal, a principal, director of a private facility for handicapped students, and director of a statewide dissemination project. All faculty members continue to work in education, although only 2 remain at the University of Maine.

Sixteen (70%) of the interns in education are working in Maine and 57% of these interns are in the districts in which they received training. Seven interns are known to have left Maine. Two are in California, 2 in Massachusetts, 1 in Vermont, 1 in Indiana, and 1 in New Jersey. Four team leaders and four faculty continue to work in education in Maine.

In describing their work in education, many project participants mentioned that the most enjoyable part is the relationship with and the assistance they are able to provide to students. Several persons have mentioned that their greatest enjoyment is from continuing their own education--continually learning from students, taking on new responsibilities, gaining new skills.

There seem to be several common problems in work in education. A lack of resources--time and funds--is felt by many. Participants do not seem to be complaining about too much work, but rather are concerned about the lack of time to do their jobs as well as they could. Several persons are concerned about a lack of support from other teachers and administrators.

Although most participants now in education work with students from low-income areas, they are generally not conscious of any specific efforts for or impact on these students. Several interns have mentioned relationships between their work with handicapped students and low income levels.

Relationship of Teacher Corps Project to Present Work

The line between the most important personal and professional experiences in Teacher Corps is blurred for most participants. The skills related to planning, individualized and creative problem solving were mentioned by several people as having been particularly important in their work. Others have commented on skills that they wish had been part of their training because they are needed now on the job--evaluation, administration, program development. But the overwhelming majority of written and spoken comments of interns and team leaders about the program were about the development of attitudes related to communication and self-confidence.

- the attitudes presented during Teacher Corps have helped me relate ideas to my children no matter what their language
- having to get along with so many people

. a real sense of confidence/competence about myself as an educator

. a real standard of professionalism and competence was set by instructors which makes me more tolerant of many that I've worked with and for

. the importance of trust and working with each person as an individual

. to not be too serious. I still laugh when everyone else is moaning

It is interesting that the area of attitudes, traditionally considered the most difficult to change, is the central area of impact for most participants in this 9th cycle project.

Did Teacher Corps Make a Difference?

In the Schools..

Most of the participants in this project feel that they did change as a result of their participation. They are still working in education, in Maine, with students in low-income areas. The differences that these people seem to bring to schools and children are:

. an openness to divergence and difference
. flexibility
. self-confidence
. the ability to access resources
. concern for the individual
. willingness to work in teams, in groups

In the University..

The teacher preparation program and graduate program in teaching remain unchanged for the most part. The experimental program and its faculty were not integrated. Programs that were there remain. There are no more field experiences than before. There is no competency-based program. The transcripts of these interns stating competencies rather than courses have been

in the registrar's office to courses, which may or may not represent the student's program.

It seems that the project made a difference in the training and in later work of participants in education, but it made no difference at the university, so that this impact might be transferred to additional teachers coming to the university for training.

Appendix A

PRESENT EMPLOYMENT AND LOCATION

So. Berwick

Cerebora	Preschool, So. Berwick
Duffy	Unknown
Evan	Noneducation, ME (Shipyard)
O'Malley	Junior High, NH
Sauermen	Junior High, So. Berwick
Zacharias	Assistant Principal, So. Berwick
(Martin	Assistant Principal, MN)*

Bath

Burke	Elementary, Bath
Gay/Carlson	Unknown, MA
Cornetta	Unemployed, NJ
Kelly	Noneducation, ME
Parshley	Unknown, ME
Reid	Elementary, VT
(Robinson	Unknown)

Buckfield

Clark	Noneducation, ME
Jennings/Lewis	Elementary, Auburn
Nickenson	Unknown
Ridley	Elementary L.D.; Saco
Trafton	Noneducation, ME (State Senate)
Wallace/Gilbert	Elementary, Buckfield
(Boyd	Director, Pathways (sheltered workshop) Lewiston)*

Mexico

Buckingham/Lever	Elementary, Mexico
Dugas	Substitute, Mexico
Ferris/Chamberlain	Reading Coordinator, Mexico
Melanson/Gallant	Elementary, Mexico
Murray	Noneducation, ME
Roberson	Elementary, CA
Theriault	HS Resource Rm. Mexico
(Bradford	Unknown)*

*( ) Team Leaders

Saco

Cote	Assoc. Dean Resident Life, MA
Littlefield	Unemployed, ME
Marshall	Preschool, ME
McDowell	Elementary, Canada
Polackwich	Unknown
Riesold	Director, Sp. Ed., Freeport
(Saucy	Principal, Saco, Lemire, Teacher, Saco)*

Waterboro

Beaty	Elementary, Waterboro
Young/Bettie	Research Asst. Doctorate Student, Indiana University
Curran	Unknown, ME
Fox	Unknown, ME
Gagne	Elementary, Waterboro
Kellman	Noneducation, CA (Personnel Management)
White/Mandle	Elementary, Waterboro
(Hahn	Director, NIE Dissemination Project, Augusta)*

Faculty

Walker	Executive Secretary, WA
Bemis	Director, Outreach Services, ME
Crosby	Coordinator Field-Based Doctorate in NH, ME
Edwards	Associate Professor Communications, NY
Hayes	Dean, Canada
Massey	Executive Secretary, ME
Lyons	Chairperson, Special Education, ME

TEACHER CORPS FOLLOW-UP

Name:

Mailing Address:

1. Please list the jobs you've held since 1975 related to education or social service.

JOB	RESPONSIBILITIES

2. What part of your work have you enjoyed most?

3. What are major problems you have in your work?

4.

(a) What part(s) of your work have had impact on low income students?

(b) What do you think the impact on low income students has been?

WORK	IMPACT

5. List important teaching skills that you gained through Teacher Corps.

List the most important you have gained since Teacher Corps.

6. What in your Teacher Corps experience (activities, people, attitudes) has been most important to you in the last five years?

(a) Professionally -

(b) Personally

7. What do you now wish had been a part of Teacher Corps?

8. Please complete the following sentences:

   (a) Teacher burnout is

   (b) Working with handicapped students in the least restrictive environment has meant that

   (c) My experience in multicultural education has been

   (d) Low-income students require